

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
November 19, 2008; 4:30 p.m.
Council Chambers**

PRESENT	ABSENT
Akua B. Agyei	Ian Kohen
Trena Carter	Greg Lewis
Tony McClendon	Rosalind Pegram
Gil Palmer	John Roberts
John Stroh	Jason Staley
Pam Vincent	
Commissioner Volunteer Present :	
Shiva Rallipalli	

STAFF PRESENT:

Director Arlette Tinsley, Deputy Director Lorraine Smith.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Commissioner John Stroh made a motion to approve the September 2008 minutes, seconded by Commissioner Trena Carter. **Minutes approved unanimously.**

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Deputy Director Smith reported there was no activity over the last month and the Donations Account balance remains at \$6,819.95.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:

Chairperson Palmer stated that he attended the Neighbors Talking – Middle East, sponsored by the Mayor's Multi-Cultural Awareness Committee. He stated that it was a very educational evening. Some of the activities included having his name written in Arabic. Chairperson Palmer stated that he learned much new information and that he believed the program dispelled stereotypes about persons from the Middle East.

Chairperson Palmer informed the commissioners that the Columbus Police Department swore in an African-American police officer in October. He stated that the officer is Bernard Sims. He felt this was extremely positive, but felt that the key challenge is retaining Officer Sims, based on historical hiring challenges for the CPD which are similar to small city police departments everywhere. Vice-Chair McClendon offered to provide any help in making sure that Officer Sims stays in the position. Chairperson Palmer informed the commissioners that Sims had met the State Trooper requirements and then re-applied to the CPD, which he believed helped him get an offer from the CPD. The Commissioners further discussed previous challenges in African American retention in the police department, and the connection between African American officer retention and the environment. Commissioners asked how they can support CPD's diversity efforts. Director Tinsley emphasized how individuals can make a difference in supporting the police department's diversity efforts, including being engaged in CPD outreach efforts-- attending police department programs and activities such as the Officer Reserve Program or the Citizens Academy which gives residents the chance to "walk" in the shoes of an officer.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Tinsley reported on the budget constraints faced by all departments of the City. She reported that in order to save money, the City has dismissed all part-time employees; cuts have been made in programs such as DARE, PAAL and Ethnic Expo. Those programs might continue but without city support. Chairperson Palmer reported that the Columbus community has come up with funds to keep Ethnic Expo going. Director Tinsley informed Commissioners that she wasn't sure that the Commission will get support for the Annual Dinner from the Mayor's promotional budget and that the MLK Breakfast may be impacted as well. She also stated that it was reported in the Department Head Meeting with the Mayor that the budget may get even worse in 2010. The Mayor mentioned that entire departments may have to be eliminated although that is not his goal. Director Tinsley stated that the cuts have impacted staffing and other operations of the Human Rights office such as printing and the way in which the Commission provides its services. She reported that the Commission is participating in a Six Sigma project to look at the area of community education and outreach and maximizing CHRC resources and cutting waste. Sameer Samudra, who is the project leader for the Commission's Six Sigma project, will be interviewing CHRC customers such as the commissioners, city council, local businesses, etc. The Commissioners further discussed what they've heard about HB 1001 and the various theories about the financial impact upon the City; the potential LOIT and/or EDIT Tax were discussed.

Director Tinsley reported that Commissioner Staley has resigned due to constraints cause by his employment and his re-enrollment in a full-time education program. After discussing the situation with the Commission's Council Liaison Priscilla Scalf, Director Tinsley forwarded Commission Volunteer Shiva Rallipalli's application to Council Liaison Scalf for her review and consideration for Commissioner Staley's position since Shiva applied in the last round and has been participating quite significantly on behalf of the Commission at various events.

Director Tinsley reported that Commission staff took a national origin case and a racial harassment case, both in employment.

2009 Annual Dinner – Director Tinsley reported to the Commissioners that Joe Loughrey and Tim Solso will be our Laws Award recipients and that Mr. Loughrey will be the guest speaker. Based upon their availability, the Commission's 2009 Annual dinner will be held on March 30.

Director Tinsley reported that Mr. Loughrey's replacement Tom Linebarger, the new COO, will be meeting with various community members on December 1. Director Tinsley was invited and she will be attending.

Director Tinsley reported that Commission Volunteer attended the NAACP Dinner and represented the Commission there. Commission Volunteer Rallipalli provided an update to the Commissioners and reported that the Director of the Gleaners Food Bank from Indianapolis was the guest speaker. He also reported that there were candidates running for office and elected officials in the audience. He reported that the NAACP conducted some fundraising at the dinner for next year scholarship fund.

OPEN FORUM:

Commissioner Carter asked about a situation she became aware of regarding the Garden City Mobile Home Park's housing conditions. Director Tinsley gave an update and overview of what action is being taken for the residents of the park, who are mostly Latino. She reported that she was invited to First Presbyterian to provide input how to help the residents. She states that Council Liaison Scalf, the Mayor and Chairperson Palmer were made aware of her invitation to provide input. She stated that there were differing opinions about how to best help the residents including

moving all of the residents out to a new location to helping repair units, some of which were affected by the flood as well as pre-existing damage and poor condition. Some of the help that has been started include Barb Smitherman and Bob Smitherman offering to go door-to-door to assess the condition of each home. Director Tinsley reported that she informed those involved in the efforts to report any possible civil rights violations to her. There was discussion about conditions such as the sewer, and water in the park.

FOR ACTION:

Funding Request – Inclusive Community Coalition:

Commissioner Stroh reviewed the ICC request with the Commissioners. **Upon motion of John Stroh, seconded by Commissioner Carter, the Commission unanimously approved the allocation of \$200 to assist ICC with the costs of bringing in guest speaker Dr. Miguel de la Torre.**

Commissioner Stroh reported that the ICC will need help with the planning and will need volunteers to help on that evening. He also reported that the ICC is not a lobby for political action and is strictly educational. Commissioner Stroh indicated that ICC plans to have six educational events per year, every other month.

C.A.M.E.O.:

Deputy Director Smith provided Commissioners with an update on Cameo. She reported that the official name was changed during the last meeting of the Outreach Committee – CAMEO stands for Columbus Area Multi-Ethnic Organization. Deputy Director Smith reported that a second meeting was held to help form the African American Association and that there was a broader audience than at the first meeting. She stated also that Director Tinsley was recruited by the Outreach Committee as a facilitator to guide the various ethnic groups through a process of team building, work planning and education. Director Tinsley has devised a facilitator plan and the first meeting is planned in January. Director Tinsley's facilitation efforts will have a definite end at approximately six months.

Other:

Commissioner Agyei reported that the African, African-American Affinity group at Cummins is putting together a timeline for Black History month. She made a request of Commissioners and staff to forward any information to her regarding the timeline, especially from a local perspective.

ADJOURNMENT:

Other items on the agenda were tabled due to the lateness of the hour and the meeting was unanimously **adjourned**.